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A TIBETAN MANDALA

THE MANDALA IS A MAGICAL SYMBOL OF THE UNIVERSE, WHICH IS REPRESENTED AS A WALLED CITY WITH FOUR GATES SURROUNDED BY EMBLEMS OF THE SKY AND THE CIRCLES OF THE HEAVENLY WORLDS. IN THE CENTER OF THE MANDALA IS A FORMATION OF LOTUS PETALS ADORNED WITH THE SACRED LETTERS WHICH SIGNIFY THE MODES OF CONSCIOUSNESS. MANDALAS ARE USED IN THE DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION



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THE BUDDHA OF THE FIVE HUNDRED LOHANS

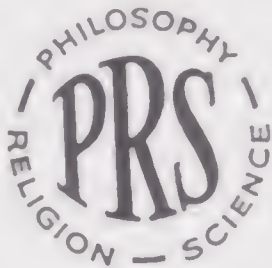
THE BUDDHA IS HERE REPRESENTED IN MEDITATION, HIS ROBES ADORNED WITH THE FIGURES OF HIS SAINTS, EACH OF WHICH IS AN INTELLECTUAL EXTENSION OF HIS OWN CONSCIOUSNESS. THE FIGURE OF BRONZE AND LACQUER WAS FORMERLY IN THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF THE EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

SELF-UNFOLDMENT
By Disciplines Of
Realization

By Manly P. Hall

*Releasing and developing
the inward perceptions...*

*Practical instructions in
the philosophy of disciplined
thinking and feeling...*



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I

THEORY OF DISCIPLINES

THIS book will have to use words in an attempt to reveal to you something that cannot be put into words. Consideration of metaphysical disciplines must begin with a definition of terms, for only after having established the meaning of certain words can we proceed safely with this extremely abstract study. But success in your study will require that you develop an intuitive grasp of metaphysical implications.

Meditation is an inward contemplation of divine realities. The subjects of meditation are the aspects of Truth. Truth may be cognized only when the student is in a tranquil state. There must be no tension or effort.

Realization is the simultaneous understanding and acceptance of the divinity and the divine purpose in all things. Even more, it is the acceptance of things as they are, and the *rightness* of things as they are.

Illumination is a state of conscious at-one-ment with the Universal Principle—man's participation in Truth. The methods by which illumination may be achieved are called disciplines.

Discipline is the specific directing and controlling of personal action. Discipline results in complete self-mastery.

All discipline must be effortless—yet actual. Spiritual development is not the result of a desperate effort to be good. It is rather an inward realization of right which transmutes the whole nature into the likeness of Truth.*

I

Growth is natural to man. No one thinks of a flower trying to bloom, or of a tree trying to grow. The blossoming of the flower is a manifestation of universal law flowing through the plant; it is the will of the Infinite made manifest in the finite. Illumination is the blossoming of the soul in man; it is just as natural, simple, and inevitable as the flowering of the rose. The wise man does not try to be wise; wisdom is as natural to him as folly is common to ordinary mortals. Man does not have to try to be himself.

Effort is evidence of inconsistency in the individual. Most religious organizations impose strict rules and regulations upon their members. These rules and regulations consist principally of "thou shalt nots," the purpose being to force man into a state of grace by inhibiting and limiting him. Any individual who tries to crush out with brute force of will the vices within himself, achieves only inhibition and neurosis.

When through realization we come to understand the divine energy that causes us to exist and grow, we cease to impede its natural flow in and through ourselves. When through realization we become aware of this divine virtue within ourselves, our inner nature is enlightened, with the result that our outer nature inevitably is transmuted.

* In Zen Buddhism the way of illumination is called the "gateless gate." The Taoists of China describe it as the "effortless effort."

II

Metaphysical disciplines should not be directed toward material ends. The true mystic does not meditate or concentrate in an effort to attract to himself the things of the material world; nor does he attempt to find in meditation an escape from the responsibilities or problems of his objective life. This does not mean, however, that metaphysical disciplines produce *no* physical result. When a man puts his inner life in order, through meditation and realization, the result is a happier and better physical existence.

If you can be taught the philosophical life, that is, the effortless way to grow, you will have been established in the foundations of wisdom. If this book can reveal in some way through the insufficient medium of words the wordless truth that being wise is the most simple and natural state of the evolved man, a great and permanent good will be yours.

The Chinese goddess, Kuan Yin, the "Lady of Mercy," is depicted robed in flowing garments which are, to the Buddhist mind, symbolical of the cosmic pattern of life. Existence is really a patterned flowing toward the real; a motion in space; a flowing of all life toward wisdom and truth.

Metaphysical disciplines are not to be regarded as competitive exercises in which one vies with another in the magnitude of his imaginings, or yearns toward some metaphysical aristocracy. All metaphysical exercises worthy of the name are an unfolding of self into the light of virtue, beauty, and wisdom.

The illustration for this lesson is taken from the Zen school of Chinese art. It is the "lone traveler," a solitary



(Chinese painting showing a strong Zen influence.
In the author's collection.)

THE PILGRIM, STAFF IN HAND, STANDS ON THE BRINK OF THE SENSORY
SPHERE.

HE FACES OUT TOWARD THE SHADY FORMS OF THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS,
SYMBOLS OF THE GREAT SPIRITUAL TRUTHS WHICH ALWAYS LIE BEYOND.

BETWEEN THE SEA, THE GULF OF MAYA